

## Message Text

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14

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 OMB-01 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11

LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01 /156 W  
----- 035181

R 211311Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9856

INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7442

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, IS

SUBJECT: THREATENED RESIGNATION OF HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY

YITZHAK BEN-AHARON

REF: TEL AVIV 7298

1. IN SITUATION WHICH IN LONG RUN COULD THREATEN COHESIVENESS OF LABOR ALIGNMENT AS POLITICAL FORCE, YITZHAK BEN-AHARON'S CONFRONTATION WITH TOP LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP, PARTICULARLY PRIMIN MEIR, ESCALATED OVER PAST FEW DAYS. NEWSPAPERS HAVE REPORTED HE IS ABOUT TO RESIGN, ALTHOUGH HISTADRUT SOURCES SAY NO OFFICIAL ACTION TAKEN--YET.

2. FOLLOWING WIDELY REPORTED REMARKS BY BEN-AHARON CRITICIZING LACK OF ADEQUATE FUNDS FROM LABOR PARTY TO FINANCE HISTADRUT ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND IMPLYING THAT SOME LABOR PARTY LEADERS REJOICED IN RESULTS OF HISTADRUT ELECTION, PRIMIN SEPT 18 BITTERLY ATTACKED BEN-AHARON FOR THESE COMMENTS AND REITERATED HER REFUSAL TO ACCEDE TO HIS DEMANDS THAT HE BE DESIGNATED NOW AS HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY. HOWEVER, PRIMIN EVENING SEPT 18 TELEPHONED BEN-AHARON TO SAY THERE IS NO REASON FOR HIM TO RESIGN AND CRYPTICALLY PROMISED THERE  
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MAY BE OCCASION FOR THEM TO DRINK A TOAST TOGETHER.

3. BEN-AHARON SEPT 19 REMOVED PERSONAL PAPERS FROM HIS OFFICE IN HISTADRUT HEADQUARTERS AND RETURNED TO HIS KIBBUTZ FOR SEVERAL WEEKS LEAVE. HE ALSO CANCELLED SCHEDULED VISIT TO TOKYO EARLY OCTOBER TO ATTEND MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION FREE TRADE UNIONS, OF WHICH HE IS A VICE PRESIDENT.

4. SOME LABOR PARTY LEADERS HAVE ESTIMATED THAT LOSS OF KNESSET ELECTION VOTES WHICH MIGHT RESULT FROM BEN-AHARON RESIGNATION WOULD BE MARGINAL, WITH LOSSES COMPENSATED BY GAINS IN VOTES FROM PEOPLE WHO DO NOT AGREE WITH HIS LEFT-WING VIEWS AND HIS CONTROVERSIAL LEADERSHIP. THIS WAS VIEW EXPRESSED TO ME BY MINLABOR ALMOGI DURING MY CALL ON HIM SEPT 20. OTHERS CONCERNED ABOUT ADVERSE EFFECT BEN-AHARON RESIGNATION WOULD HAVE ON INTERNAL PARTY RELATIONS AND REACTIONS IT MAY TRIGGER BY MANY WORKERS WHO VIEW HIM AS CHAMPION OF THEIR INTERESTS.

5. CLOSE COLLEAGUES OF BEN-AHARON HAVE TOLD EMBOFF THEY DO NOT FULLY AGREE WITH HIS TACTICS IN DEMANDING IMMEDIATE CONFRONTATION WITH LABOR PARTY TOP ECHELON. THEY BELIEVE HE SHOULD BIDE HIS TIME, AND IN PARTY CAUCUS AFTER KNESSET ELECTION, HE WOULD MOST LIKELY BE SELECTED TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE. THEY BELIEVE THAT AFTER KNESSET ELECTION, DECISION FAVORABLE TO BEN-AHARON COULD COME AS RESULT OF PRESSURE WITHIN LABOR PARTY-MAPAM ALIGNMENT FROM GROUPS WHO EITHER (A) ACTIVELY SUPPORT HIS VIEWS OR (B) PREFER THAT SENIOR HISTADRUT POST NOT GO TO PERSON IDENTIFIED WITH EX-MAPAI FACTION OF LABOR PARTY, WHICH WOULD FURTHER CONSOLIDATE TOP POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE IN THIS FACTION, DOMINATED BY FINMIN SAPIR.

6. COMMENT. WE SHARE VIEW THAT RESIGNATION OF BEN-AHARON WOULD HAVE MARGINAL EFFECT ON KNESSET ELECTION OUTCOME, ALTHOUGH IT DIFFICULT AT THIS STAGE TO MEASURE EXTENT OF REACTION BY MANY WORKING GROUPS. MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM IS THAT INTERNAL RIFTS IN ALIGNMENT WOULD BE AGGRAVATED BY HIS RESIGNATION AND TRIGGER SHARP CONTROVERSY OVER SELECTION OF SUCCESSOR. PARTY INCREASINGLY ESSENTIAL FOR  
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RULING ALIGNMENT TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS FOLLOWING ELECTIONS ON RANGE OF IMPORTANT DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL ISSUES. WE BELIEVE LEADERS OF PARTY FACTIONS OVER NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL FIND WAY TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCE, WITH BEN-AHARON RECEIVING ADEQUATE ASSURANCE OF HIS CONTINUATION IN OFFICE, ALTHOUGH FORMAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AFTER KNESSET ELECTION.  
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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PINT, ELAB, IS, HISTADRUT, (BEN-AHARON, YITZHAK)  
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